# Cambridge Library 21 - Technology Work group

## **Interim Report January 21, 1997**

## **Summary of Critical Technology Considerations**

#### Introduction

The following outline summarizes the discussions of the Technology Workgroup to date. At this stage of the process, the workgroup is presenting its assumptions, its view of the broad goals of technology in the library, a long list of possible services that might be provided, and the means for achieving the broad goals. The committee is not making specific recommendations at this point; this report is intended to provide a background and context for making decisions regarding priorities for developing technology-based services. The final report of the committee will suggest priorities for implementing such services. Not everything has to be done at once, and decisions about whether to do some things can be deferred.

It should also be pointed out that many of these considerations will work no matter what the building design turns out to be. However, optimal building design can facilitate the implementation of technology, and some technologies will allow more flexibility in the relationships between main and branch libraries.

It is also true that some of the services listed below could be implemented before a building design is finalized. The workgroup will recommend pilot projects for some of them.

# I. Working assumptions

- Traditional library mission is a collective effort to make information and associated services widely available to public at low or no cost.
- Capabilities and availability of technology are increasing as cost decreases.
- Technology is penetrating into many facets of the lives of the citizens of Cambridge; This
  penetration has two aspects: the continued investment in computer and networking
  technology by various city agencies and in the presence of computers and Internet
  connections in people's homes. Technology makes possible increased and remote access
  to shared information and improved inter-user communication.
- Traditional book publishing and reading will continue to flourish, but we anticipate that a
  great deal of material will switch to electronic publishing, requiring technology to access
  it. Even some traditionally published books will have associated electronic information
  that can be accessed in new ways with technology.

# II. Broad library goals that can be fostered by technology (i.e., major objectives)

- Augment traditional library content and services
- Provide access to library services and information from outside the library
- Make broad array of information resources available to all constituents, of all ages, abilities, skills, cultures and languages.

• Develop a state-of-the-art public library for Cambridge

## III. Specific services that could be offered

- Special services to all cultures: multi-lingual software, language-training software
- Special services to the disabled: large-print screens, talking screens, voice- activated software, accessible workstations
- Special children's services: learning games, child-enabling software
- Job-search, career / resume center: resume software, on-line job listings, links to company information
- Enhanced on-line catalog; e.g., self-service check-out/check-in, personalized searching, reservation services, as well as traditional catalog features
- Reference services: e-mail reference requests, intelligent searching agents, personalized searching, notification of new acquisitions
- Discussion groups; e.g., on-line discussion groups, ad-hoc affinity groups
- Publishing: library as electronic publisher for Cambridge-oriented information
- Literacy: use computers to teach reading, provide computer-literacy training
- Internet access / e-mail for patrons (on-site and from outside the library)
- Connection to Mass. Education Satellite broadcast network and more
- Computers to use in library, also laptops to check out
- Wide variety of software installed on computers; also software to check out
- Multi-media support: sound-proofing, digital projection pads, listening rooms with headphones
- Support businesses with reference assistance, gateway to other libraries, subscriptions to sharable data-bases

## IV. Means of achieving broad goals

### A. Staffing

- On-going comprehensive technology training for entire library staff
- Adequate and dedicated support staff for technology, with special skills and education
- Augment staff with trained volunteers

#### **B.** Collaboration

- Obtain support from local technology businesses
- Take advantage of local higher-education institutions and the state university system
- Provide curricular support to local schools
- Partner with local services such as youth centers, elder centers, public schools
- Participate in state and national initiatives
- Share the collections: expand concept of interlibrary loan and share cost of site licenses for software and databases

#### C. Building design and equipment

#### 1. Building design and furnishings

- Maximum flexibility for lighting, electricity and telecommunications
- Accommodate different forms and styles of use with a variety of locations and configurations of workspace and computers
- Support "theme spaces" with appropriate technology
- Provide access to computers for disabled
- Consider ergonomics: follow established guidelines for proper workspace configuration

#### 2. Technology infrastructure

- High-speed high-bandwidth network everywhere
- Wireless networking for hard-to-wire buildings
- Easy access to services from all branches, local centers
- Internet ports for users' laptops
- Multi-functional desktop computers: avoid special purpose hardware
- Desktop video
- Security and privacy

#### 3. Technological "furniture" (equipment)

- Assistive technology for visually / motor-impaired
- Augment with older donated equipment need to balance this with the need for compatibility with other equipment already owned
- Support multiple character sets and languages
- Support a variety of operating systems (e.g. MacOS, Windows 95)
- Consider equipment to be consumable rather than a capital expenditure: expect that hardware will need to be upgraded every three years or so

#### 4. Desktop software

- Educational software, children's software, literacy software, other specialty software
- Assistive software for visually / motor-impaired
- Software should support multiple character sets and languages
- Support a variety of software packages (word-processors, web browsers, spreadsheets, etc.)
- Common user interfaces for all commonly used software; Web-like interfaces for library software

#### D. Centrally managed services

- City-wide web pages
- CD-ROM databases
- Access to licensed remote on-line databases

## Workgroup members and plans

The members of this Workgroup are Ted Burton, Kathryn Erat, John Gintell, Kathy Klemperer, Mark Pinson, and Lisa Peterson.

Additional information is available for further explanation of material in this report.

The Workgroup intends upon reviewing these considerations with other members of the Cambridge community as it evolves them into a more specific recommendation.